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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PREL](#), [MARR](#), [GR](#), [TU](#), [INTERNAL](#)

SUBJECT: GREECE: NEW SECURITY POLICY, BUT LITTLE CHANGE IN
TURKEY-FIRST DEFENSE STRATEGY

Classified By: POL/MIL CHIEF DAVE RANK FOR REASONS 1.4 (B/D)

1. (C) Summary. An updated Greek national security strategy appears to suggest that Athens' concern about a military threat from Turkey may be diminishing. Initial discussions with senior- and mid-level defense and national security officials offer little evidence of such a change, however. Post will continue to look for signs of any real shift in Greek defense policy, and will encourage any signals that the country is moving away from its unproductive focus on its eastern neighbor. End Summary.

2. (U) On March 1, the Greek government Council for Foreign Affairs and Defense (known by its Greek acronym, KYSEA), chaired by PM Karamanlis, ratified a new version of the country's defense and national security policy. A Ministry of Defense announcement concerning the new policy emphasized the rising importance of asymmetrical threats such as terrorism, illegal immigration, drug smuggling and general instability from the north of Greece's borders. The MOD statement named these asymmetrical threats ahead of the traditional focal point of Greek defense policy, Turkey, and commented on the improvement in Greece-Turkey relations.

3. (C) On one level, there was little new in this policy statement, the first of its kind by the Karamanlis government. As early as September, 2001 (immediately after the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania), then-Defense Minister Akis Tsohatzopoulos called for a new defense doctrine to deal with terrorism and other asymmetrical threats. What seems to be new is the emphasis the government's statement puts on them. The government must have known it would cause comment by giving pride of place to non-traditional threats, rather than to the traditional bogeyman from Turkey. The point was not missed by the Greek media, nor by military officials with whom emboffs spoke. At least some of the generals in the Greek Pentagon expressed concern that such a shift in priorities (if real) would endanger Greek security (and Greek defense spending - already under threat from the government's austerity campaign).

4. (C) Comment. Certainly, if there has been a shift in perspective at the top of the Greek government, it has yet to trickle down very far. In a January informal conversation with PolCouns, MOD Spiliotopoulos was adamant about the continued danger posed by the Turkish military. Similarly, in a recent briefing for embassy DATT personnel (organized to discuss asymmetric threats to Greece), Greek military intelligence officers clearly identified Turkey as their country's number one threat. Nevertheless, we will encourage this fledgling reorientation of Greece's military doctrine. The more Greece shifts its focus to asymmetrical threats, and away from Turkey, the more capable its armed forces should be in coping with the new threats facing the NATO Alliance and the more comfortable its leaders will be in letting them take on jobs beyond territorial defense. End Comment.

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